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THE

Commonweal



THE AGE OF DISCUSSION

by **Russell Kirk**

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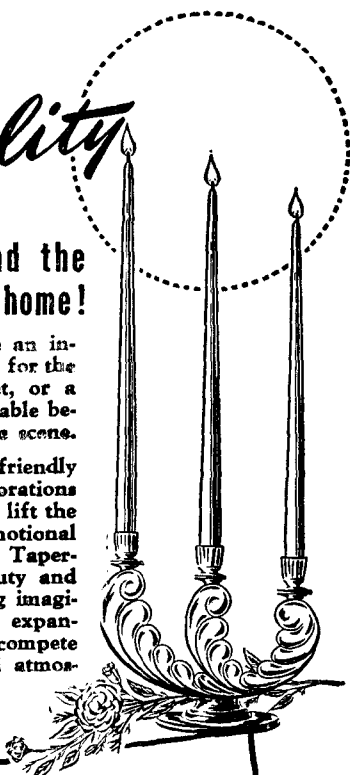
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THE COMMONWEAL
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The Commonweal

week by week

DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

DURING World War II the United States performed such prodigious feats of production as to confound observers from other lands. Our farms and factories kept millions of men in the armed forces supplied with food, clothing and weapons although they were stationed thousands of miles from home and at opposite ends of the globe. At the same time a mighty stream of all sorts of American supplies was diverted to our allies. Yet there were few domestic shortages—some rationing and a few restrictions, but no real hardships for the civilian population as a whole. Sustained production on this tremendous scale astounded the outside world.

In the past decade respect has been growing for another of our national talents: the ability to distribute so much of the product of our increasingly efficient labors. At this task we Americans have been making more and more headway. The latest figures for average income or for the number of families with cars, or with TV sets, supply much evidence of American proficiency at distribution, too. (There are foreign critics, of course, who hold that too many human values are lost on the road to such widespread material prosperity to be worth the price, but many of their compatriots would willingly take that chance.)

This is not to say that there are not large numbers of Americans who live outside the pale of current prosperity, both in our notorious urban slums and in the country. And the prominence which the press gives to our accumulation of farm surpluses serves as a constant reminder that here is one area where effective means of distribution have not yet been found.

In view of this domestic picture, with its bright sectors and deep shadows, and of the incalculable human need abroad, what should the United States do? Great gifts bring with them commensurate responsibilities. And it cannot be repeated too often that no country can for long hope to be an island of prosperity in this rapidly shrinking world. This would be true under any circumstances, but it is

doubly so with a worldwide anti-American revolutionary force bent on arousing and exploiting national, racial and class resentments (many of them, unhappily, well founded) in order to arrive at domination of the world.

ONE great possibility challenges us as a nation. It is to embark consciously, wholeheartedly and determinedly on a much more full-fledged policy of sharing our abundance—our know-how, as well as the huge stores of commodities it is able to produce (and, potentially, to distribute). That is the principal theme of the resolutions just adopted at the annual meeting of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference at Lexington, Ky., where a sense of stewardship was everywhere manifest. The Directors call for a "Program for Shared Abundance." They maintain that "unless we use our abundance in accord with the demands of our own enlightened self-interest as well as the dictates of our conscience, we must rightly expect judgment to descend upon us from God and from the disappointed and angry peoples of the world."

Even with an impassioned will to rise to the demands of justice and of Christian compassion in this regard, the American people will have many real obstacles to overcome. But the Conference is extremely practical about it. Here in the United States it calls for reinstituting the food-stamp plan for needy families of a decade and more ago. It also urges a much expanded surplus commodity school lunch program, especially in view of greatly increased enrollments. Also, more of our farm surpluses should be made available to charitable agencies for dispensing to those in need.

For the two million American farm families with annual incomes under two thousand dollars the NCRL manifests special concern. It calls for longer term government loans at low rates of interest—when the credit required is not available elsewhere—coupled with a major expansion

of the Extension Service, so that hitherto unsuccessful farmers can be shown how to make sustained good use of this new capital. In many cases investigation would show that sub-marginal lands should be withdrawn from cultivation, and new industries that would furnish employment set up in the locality. For the migratory workers, whose continuing plight is the greatest occupational blot on the national escutcheon, the Conference finds that all sorts of things are urgently needed: homes and land, the full protection of social legislation and strong labor organizations.

But speaking in general, the real test of our own sense of stewardship is our attitude toward the hungry and despairing fellow-creatures of other lands; for it is easier to dismiss them from our minds, while practical obstacles to sharing our plenty with them are often even greater than at home. No half-hearted measures will do. We Americans need somehow to develop a fire of charity based on a salutary fear about the disparity between our own plenty and the wholesale misery of others. We need to approach this task with a faith that will move mountains—this time mountains of idle fibers and foodstuffs. Material plenty and human need find themselves in such close conjunction that a nation with any claim at all to a Judeo-Christian *ethos* has no other choice.

THEORY OF COEXISTENCE

ON October 24 there occurred one of the most important pieces of Russian news since the death of Stalin. *Kommunist*, the theoretical journal

NEXT WEEK

JOHN STANLEY writes about what he has observed on the American countryside.

"Picture this: a frame house of skimpy proportions, two stories high, with a shaky, narrow porch along one side, built of second-hand lumber and covered with tar shingles pressed to look like yellow brick. It's on a dirt road pocked with ruts and stones—dust in August, a slough in March and a mad toboggan-slide in December. . . . The view is magnificent: a thousand feet below and miles away is a winding river lined with rich black farms where the land is as carefully utilized as it is in France. In the distance there are lavender hills, and in the winter moonlight blue snow and black trees. Inside the kitchen door hangs the only light bulb in the whole house. . . ."

of the Soviet Communist Party, the official organ of its central committee, devoted a long, lead editorial to the idea of coexistence. This article marks the formal abandonment of the doctrine of Lenin and Stalin that war between the Socialist and capitalist worlds is inevitable, war in which the capitalist world, as such, would be destroyed.

The article is particularly important because the Communists mean what they write in *Kommunist*. It is a declaration of policy, not propaganda for export. And, as Hannah Arendt has emphasized, totalitarian governments act not in accordance with those observable facts which affect other countries but in accordance with their ideology. They are inner-directed to such an extent that they frequently refuse to recognize real signals from the outside world.

The article accounts for Mr. Khrushchev's September address to the East German delegates to Moscow. He said then that the Russian smile was genuine; the Communists wished to live tranquilly. But if anyone "believes that our smiles involve abandonment of the teaching of Marx, Engels and Lenin he deceives himself poorly." The abandonment of the concept of inevitable war is in line with Marx's prediction: the class war would end with the victory of the proletariat, or with the mutual destruction of the opposing classes. Neither Lenin nor Stalin accepted the latter alternative, but they could not foresee the terrible destructive power of our new weapons. Mr. Khrushchev, however, has stressed the mutually destructive consequences of a hydrogen war. Marx's second alternative is suddenly possible and the Communists wish to avoid it.

The article emphasizes that the new line is here to stay: "The policy of peaceful coexistence is not a temporary one. It is a policy that genuinely corresponds to the interests of the Soviet people. It is not a question of an abstract discussion. It touches on the main issues of our epoch: how to live and let live."

But, in Soviet reasoning, to reject Marx's second alternative is to accept and cling to the first. What cannot be accomplished by warfare will be achieved through economic competition. During our tranquil peace this "healthy competition" will cause country after country to desert "the camp of capitalism for that of Socialism." Lenin's theory of the unequal economic development of capitalist countries explains why individual countries will fall gradually. According to the Communists this is what we have to look forward to in our epoch of coexistence. And in this period who can guess how often we will encounter more Pragues, other Koreas?

ISLANDS OF DEPRESSION

FOR what it was worth, a man out of work during the depression of the thirties had one consolation: he knew he had plenty of company. And this knowledge *was* worth something, for in economic life it is the contrast between riches and poverty that hurts most. In many American cities, the poor live within a stone's throw of the rich, and when that is the case they often feel like throwing stones. There may be places in the world where the poor love nothing quite so much as watching the rich enjoy their privileges, but if there are, the United States is not one of them.

The man out of work today is in a situation much different from that of their thirties. The economy is booming, General Motors is breaking every record on the books, and all the talk is of unprecedented peacetime prosperity. No wonder those who are not sharing in the general economic boom feel they are living in a world all their own, cut off from the mainstream of national experience. Yet these islands of depression do exist; they are real enough. There is nothing deader than a one-industry town in which, for one reason or another, the main industry has closed down. Today many New England textile towns are suffering this fate as a result of the movement of industry to the South, and heaven knows the coal towns of Pennsylvania have long been living through their own private depression as a result of the continuing decline in the use of coal.

Over the years, various plans have been put forward to help such depressed areas without much success. Recently, however, President Eisenhower gave his approval to a plan proposed to him by Dr. Arthur F. Burns, chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, and Gabriel Hauge, Mr. Eisenhower's personal adviser on economic questions. The idea as it has so far been explained has great promise.

What the Administration proposal amounts to is a domestic Point Four plan, on a small scale and on a local level. Although the details have not yet been spelled out, financial and technical assistance will go to some eighty communities where substantial unemployment has been persistent. The emphasis throughout will be on private enterprise, and it is likely that much of the assistance will take the form of helping communities to help themselves, by providing facilities for new industries, training workers in new skills, and making funds available for long-range loans.

There are, of course, unmistakable political implications in this sudden flurry of activity. As the Democrats are sure to point out, they have been

talking about this problem for a long time, without much success, and the Republican program bears a strong resemblance to one which was previously advanced by Senator Paul Douglas, Democrat of Illinois. Democratic party leaders need not be overly suspicious to feel that something more than sheer coincidence is involved between the timing of this local Point Four Program and the national elections in 1956—especially since many of the distressed areas were expected to be danger spots for the Republicans on Election Day. But politics or no, the plan is a good one, and we are happy to see it in the making, whoever gets the credit for it.

THE SAAR VOTES NO

THE recent rejection by the Saarlanders of the proposed plan to "Europeanize" their territory has been widely interpreted as a revival of narrow nationalism and a serious blow to the cause of a United Europe.

We wonder, however, if this foreboding interpretation of the Saar plebiscite is wholly correct. Certain circumstances surrounding the "European referendum" would suggest that the Saarlanders were, basically, simply voting against confusion and voting for political clarity.

The idea of such a referendum was a compromise finally arrived at between France and West Germany after the collapse of several earlier proposals. The "Europeanization" which the Saarlanders were to consider was, at best, vaguely presented as a vote to have its foreign affairs and defense administered by the Western European Union (which, itself, has but rather misty political authority). Further, it could not be definitely stated how lasting this rather makeshift political arrangement would be. Such was the proposal made to a people with comparatively limited political experience, whose closest traditional ties are to Germany.

What the Saar plebiscite does seem to show is that the much-desired union of Europe and the consequent weakening of narrow nationalism will not be achieved by such desperate expedients. Nationalism is not an abstract counter in the international hurly-burly. It has been drilled into the minds of men and women; it offers effective symbols and immediate goals. It will probably always override any attempt to replace it by as shadowy and remote a substitute as the Europeanization offered to the voters in the Saar. The referendum may have been a brilliant improvisation, but brilliant improvisations are usually the strategy of retreating generals.

THE SPIRIT OF A UNIVERSITY

THE headline of a recent sports page announced that "Fordham Students Feel 'Lost' Without Football." For many years football was an important part of student life on the Fordham campus, and its history was studded with names great in sports lore. But after World War II, when the game was played on a "less commercial basis," the scores fell, the glamor faded, and the team departed.

But now—if the campus leaders are correct—almost all the students would like to see the return of football. The reason offered by one student was that when freshmen came to Fordham in the past, "they came to school, not knowing quite what to expect, and were immediately infected with football enthusiasm which welded a strong school spirit. Nothing else I can think of has enough general appeal to generate the same enthusiasm."

These are familiar sentiments; they can be matched on most large campuses across the country. As part of the social life of the average college student, football activities are probably here to stay. But football is merely a pleasant extracurricular activity; the institutions are, after all, supposedly devoted to the intellectual life.

It is in this area that a general enthusiasm should be engendered. Students do arrive with expectations of learning; they can be "infected" with scholarly enthusiasm. And a school spirit based upon such enthusiasm can be enduring and, we dare say, more valuable than that which comes from the playing field. With football gone the students of Fordham have a better opportunity to develop this school spirit. We congratulate them.

THE CRISIS OF COLONIALISM

THE Asian-African Conference last April at Bandung focused the attention of the West on one of its sick spots—its association, in the minds of more than a billion people, with a type of colonialism which cuts sharply against their urge toward self-determination.

The United States, in its official confrontation with colonialism, is forced to shift uneasily from foot to foot. We have espoused the principle of "the orderly development of self-determination," but have been forced, with tragic frequency, to support the cause of the colonial powers, all of whom are our allies.

Politically, our forced confrontation with colonialism makes clear the need for a firm, common

Western policy, based on a "timetable of reforms" which shall be at once real and realistic.

Morally estimated, we of the West should see in such a program of reforms a necessary task of atonement. It was the Christian nations of Europe which charted the "course of empire," and the Cross was often planted with the flag as one-third of the earth's land mass fell under the control of six European powers.

Colonization did bring benefits to the subject peoples—tools, roads, towns, education, hospitals. But all too often colonization also brought brutality and rankling injustices as a result of the avarice and conviction of white superiority which marked the golden age of empire.

It is, of course, precisely the anti-Christian elements of colonization—the exploitation of native peoples, the plundering of natural resources, the white man's easy assumption of racial superiority—which have aroused in the dependent peoples of the world a frantic, almost fanatic, desire to be free. They may be uncertain of the best materials to use, but they do know whose house they want to burn.

It has long been observed that Communism operates most effectively in areas made restless by social and economic discontents because it offers to people who think themselves neglected or despised a secular religion. At the heart of this religion, giving it both drive and direction, is a secular charity, internally fraudulent but externally effective. This *mystique* of Communism is already rushing into the moral vacuum created by the spiritual failure of Christian Europe. It can only be overcome by the real thing—the truly revolutionary "good news" of Christianity spelled out in the West's attitudes and actions toward the earth's millions demanding to enter into a condition of full humanity. To demand that Christian charity dictate our timetable of reforms is not hopelessly quixotic. It is simply to ask that we employ the most effective political strategy we possess.

After serving more than three years as an active editor of The Commonweal, William Clancy has resigned in order to join Newsweek's editorial staff. We trust that from time to time his new duties will permit him to contribute again to the pages of this magazine, and we extend our heartiest good wishes for his success at his new post. This week Philip Scharper joins The Commonweal as an Associate Editor. Mr. Scharper has served on the English faculty of Fordham University for the past several years. We are happy to welcome him to the staff.

The Age of Discussion

"ALTHOUGH THE MAJORITY OF AMERICANS ARE CONSERVATIVE, THEY LACK ANY INTELLECTUAL LEADERSHIP IN THE SERIOUS JOURNALS."

RUSSELL KIRK

"THAT damnable vile business": so the late Arthur Machen referred to journalism, of which he had much experience. He was writing, however, chiefly of the penny press. Since the beginning of what Bagehot calls "the Age of Discussion," the whole tone of civilized life, and the fabric of political order, have been maintained in considerable part by the serious journals of opinion and criticism. These magazines, carrying on discussion of first principles and present issues among the educated and reflective people of every generation, have exerted a profound influence upon those persons who form popular opinion—newspaper editors, lawyers, clergymen, professors and teachers, and a great many of the men and women whose names no one ever hears, but who individually command the respect of friends and neighbors, in obscure circles, and thus lead the mind of the public one way or another. But these journals of opinion and criticism have fallen upon evil days, especially in the United States; they are decreasing in number and in influence; and if they succumb altogether, probably we will find ourselves ushered out of the Age of Discussion altogether, and thrust into some Age of Conditioned Responses.

If serious journalism goes by the board, we may be left with nothing better than "that damnable vile business": for our better newspapers generally have taken their tone from the critical weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies. Henry Adams used to say that though his *North American Review* enjoyed a direct circulation of only a few hundred copies, its indirect influence was incalculable, for the editors of daily papers read it and diffused its ideas without acknowledgment. And whatever serious thought is expressed in the films, radio, and television is very rarely original: it has filtered into the realm of mass-communication from what serious media of discussion still survive. I do not relish the notion of a time when Mr. Walter Winchell and Mr. Drew Pearson

can advance without opposition their pretensions to be arbiters of taste, morals, and politics.

Now there is much that is unattractive about the Age of Discussion which Western civilization has experienced since the beginning of the nineteenth century (and, to some extent, since the Reformation). It has been an age of presumption, egoism, and frantic voices; it has challenged the wisdom of our ancestors, denied every authority, and brought mankind sometimes to the brink of destruction. Nearly eighty-five years ago, Walter Bagehot, in his *Physics and Politics*, observed that Discussion is insatiable: "Once effectually submit a subject to that ordeal, and you can never withdraw it again; you can never again clothe it with mystery, or fence it by consecration; it remains forever open to free choice, and exposed to profane deliberation." It is not always agreeable to live in a time when everything under the sun is perpetually brought into question, and every principle of life is incessantly haggled over, as if the world were one sophistical debating-society. Yet once men have got into an Age of Discussion, they are unlikely to go back into an Age of Faith; the danger is that they will sink into an era of secular propaganda, unthinking conformity, and mass-manipulation.

Mr. Robert Hutchins said recently that Discussion is the essence of Americanism. I happen to disagree with him; I do not think that we were born yesterday, and I am of the opinion that there is more to American life than arguing for arguing's sake, after the fashion of the Sophists whom Socrates undid. But for all that, I prefer the Age of Discussion to the Age of Conditioned Responses. And if serious journalism slides away into limbo, I repeat, the Age of Conditioned Responses has enveloped us.

SERIOUS journalism, in the sense of a leisurely reflective periodical, is not very old: it commenced at the end of the French Revolution, when it had become necessary to consult or to form public opinion on the principal questions of the day, rather than simply to ascertain the wishes of the court, the upper clergy, the

Russell Kirk is the author of *The Conservative Mind and Academic Freedom*. He is also editor of the forthcoming journal, *The Conservative Review*.

territorial magnates, and the great bankers and merchants. In Britain, the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly* led the way; similar journals of opinion sprang up in France, the German states, Spain, Italy, and the new American Republic. Such periodicals attained the height of their influence late in the Victorian era, probably, when they were very numerous. They are now in an advanced state of decay, so that their survival in any form is in question.

The causes of their decline are complex. New diversions, including mass-amusements and easy transportation, have weakened the influence of reading generally. The rise of the gutter press and the tidal wave of printed sensationalism and pornography, in recent years, have diminished such influence as they once exerted upon the mass of men and women. The coming of magazines of a new sort—the picture-weekly and the news-digest especially—has taken a toll of readers. Mass-marketing of ideas after the fashion of the *Reader's Digest* has had its part in all this.

In many countries, particularly in Britain, the diminished income of the middle classes who formerly comprised the great bulk of the subscription-lists has forced serious journal after serious journal to cease publication; for, despite a great deal of talk about the enlightenment of the working classes, the newly-prosperous masses have not shown the faintest interest in sober periodicals. The leaking-away of the nineteenth-century principles of conscience, private judgment, and personal responsibility (with the consequent necessity for forming personal opinions)—the retreat of what Mr. David Riesman calls “the inner-directed individual”—has done infinite mischief in this realm. And, in America especially, the Great Depression (with the two Great Wars, in Britain and the Continent) dealt these journals a terrible blow from which they have not recovered; for, being considered luxuries, they were summarily lopped off reduced budgets; and reading-habits once interrupted are not easily resumed.

Nor has the increase of popular literacy done anything to sustain the serious journals: there appears to be no sound relationship between popular literacy and really serious reading; indeed, it is possible that an inverse ratio may be described. Spain and Portugal, with the lowest literacy-rates in Western Europe, nevertheless stand very high on the list of states whose people buy and read important books and magazines; while Scandinavia, where literacy is almost universal, now stands very low on such a list; and Britain, despite centuries of relatively popular government and a long tradition of free schools, is now subject to perhaps the most vile popular press in the world and to a shocking mortality-rate in the role of serious magazines. In the United States, with virtually a century of compulsory schooling everywhere, no really serious journal now has a circulation comparable to what such magazines

had in the last century; while Japan, which never has fully submitted to the Age of Discussion and was supposed to require “re-education” by Americans, possesses serious journals with a circulation in excess of four hundred thousand copies. (The magazine of criticism and opinion is in a healthier condition in Japan, indeed, than anywhere else in the world.)

ALTHOUGH England still has more serious reviews than does the United States, the pace of calamity among them is dismaying. Many such vanished between the two wars; others, like the *Mercury* and *London Life and Letters*, were struck down by the second world war and the austerity-time which followed; promising new ventures, like *The Criterion*, have been short-lived; and every season now takes its toll among the survivors. *World Review* and the *Fortnightly* and *The Cambridge Journal*, among the monthlies, have given up the ghost; of the few remaining weeklies, the Anglican *Guardian* ceased publication two years ago, and last year *John o' London's Weekly* (the last specimen of “culture for the multitude,” of which species several journals flourished at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth) came to an end.

Of those English magazines still alive, some, like *Cornhill*, have retreated to quarterly status; and nearly all are hard pressed between rising costs and public apathy. There are still five or six weeklies of opinion in Britain, however, and about the same number of quarterlies of one sort or another, and perhaps as many monthlies. The places left vacant in the news-kiosks of the railway stations are rapidly filled by cheap “household” magazines, the dismal Sunday papers, and quantities of quasi-pornography imported from Australia or produced by enterprising London talents.

As for our own country, the picture is still more distressing, especially if we take into account our booming prosperity, no part of which extends to serious journalism. Mr. R. P. Blackmur, writing in *Sewanee Review* a decade ago, traced this decline of good magazines; but no one was sufficiently interested even to comment on his articles. Look at the tombstones: *North American Review*, *Scribner's*, *Century*, *Review of Reviews*, *World's Work*, *Bookman*, *American Review*, *Unpopular Review*, *Living Age*, and the rest. Of the old monthlies that combined a large circulation with some considerable attempt at serious discussion, only three remain: *Harper's*, *Atlantic*, and *American Mercury*. The last, in a very shaky condition, can no longer be considered serious or readable. *Harper's* and *Atlantic* survive, but at the price of a progressive vulgarization, so that often whole numbers of these magazines seem to me to be written with an eye to the *Reader's Digest*, and to consist of the same articles

written over and over again—all about how every day, in every way, we are getting better and better, and more and more liberal. They seem, indeed, to have formed a kind of trust—most obviously in advertising (for they have formally combined their efforts here), but also in the whole content and temper of their writing. They are written for the superior high-school student and the suburbanite who wants “awareness.” At the beginning of this century, *Harper’s* had an English edition (edited by Andrew Lang) with a circulation of a hundred thousand copies—more than half as much as the total circulation of the magazine today. The English edition has ceased to be, and English circulation of the American edition is negligible; and no wonder.

We have left only a half-dozen weekly journals of opinion of any wide circulation, and one fortnightly. Of these, *The Nation* may be on its last legs, in part because of its own death-urge. There are also two magazines that in some degree are critical and serious endeavors, *Saturday Review* and *New York Times Magazine*—this in a country of a hundred and sixty million people. Only two recent weekly or fortnightly magazines have enjoyed any success, *The New Yorker* and *The Reporter*—the latter only by virtue of a great capital expenditure. The only intelligent monthly journal of opinion founded in recent years is the American Jewish Committee’s *Commentary*.

In one field of publication, however, the United States excels any other nation: critical quarterlies subsidized by universities. We have more than a score of them; yet their influence is slight. It has been said that they are written by professors for professors—rather an inaccurate statement. Not many professors read them, or read much else. Most of their readers seem to be graduate students and young instructors. The editors of the popular press, the professional people, the businessmen, and even the teachers know nothing of them. The most successful, *Partisan Review* and *Yale Review* (the former, of course, not strictly a university quarterly) aspire to a circulation of ten thousand copies; most of the rest would be content with two thousand subscribers. By and large, they are not very lively, although there is some good writing and original thinking in *Sewanee Review* and three or four of the others.

Taken all in all, these weeklies, fortnightlies, monthlies, and quarterlies probably have not so large a combined influence as *Life*, or *Time*, or *Newsweek*, or *Fortune*. The better picture-magazines and news-magazines, and specialized journals like *Fortune*, have considerable merits; but, being chiefly staff-written, they do not generally have the merits of free discussion, originality of views, or independence of action.

A nation with millions of college and university graduates, then, seems content to let its serious read-

ing—let alone its serious thinking—be done by a handful of people. Probably no other civilized state is so badly off for sound writing and sound reading. And the situation is not improving. Such surveys as have been made indicate that most college graduates do no serious reading; and the more college graduates we turn out, the less reading is done per capita. Godkin’s design for government by college graduates seems rather ludicrous nowadays. For that matter, there is considerably less reading among college students than there was only a decade or two ago. When I was an undergraduate, which is not so many years since, the drug-store racks in college towns used to carry the magazines whose tombstones I have mentioned already. Look at those racks now: comic-books and a welter of pornography for the academic proles.

DEPRESSING though all this is, if the surviving serious magazines had anything to say, we should not be so very badly off. But they do not have very much to say; and what they do say, most of them say in chorus, with infinite repetitions. With a few exceptions, they are the captives of ideology; and ideology (a very different thing from principle) is fatal to thought and style. Their oppressive ideology is ritualistic liberalism.

I do not mean that we ought not to have liberal magazines: on the contrary, I should like to see more liberal magazines, but better ones. Every nation needs two bodies of opinion, its Permanence and its Progression—conservatism and liberalism. But liberalism captured by Giant Ideology is dead liberalism, and writing in such magazines is dead writing.

Mr. Leslie Fiedler, Mr. David Riesman and others have described the captivity of the ritualistic liberals to ideology. From that clutch, most of our serious journals have not yet escaped. The weekly journals of opinion suffer from it, with the exception of *The Commonweal* and *America*—which, being Catholic, cannot be ritualistically liberal, however much they may take common ground from time to time with the liberals. Such monthly magazines as survive suffer from it, and go on reciting the old dogmas of progress, equality, international amity, and the paternalism of the state as if nothing had happened in the twentieth century. The quarterlies, too, labor under this bondage for the most part, though several—*Sewanee*, *Yale Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Pacific Spectator*, *Georgia Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Confluence*, and one or two others—will publish conservative essays occasionally, especially if they do not deal directly with politics or economics. There are many quarterlies which proudly call themselves liberal; there are none, to my knowledge, which openly confess to being conservative.

In the whole range of magazines of opinion, indeed

—barring news-letters and the like—there is only one which (occasionally) calls itself conservative. (Sometimes it calls itself “individualistic,” or “libertarian,” or “really liberal.”) That is the *Freeman*; and it is not conservative. Beginning with some promise, it has suffered vicissitudes of editorship and proprietorship, and has now passed into the hands of the Foundation for Economic Education, subscribes to a kind of ossified Benthamism, preaches Cobden and Bright as Holy Writ, and is edited by a philosophical anarchist who declares that all government is an unnecessary evil and that radicals are the salt of the earth. A mad world, my masters.

John Stuart Mill had some reason for calling the conservatives “the stupid party”; but surely American conservatives cannot be so stupid as to be unable to support one serious journal of opinion. Even inveterate liberals ought to look with favor on the revival of sound conservative journalism. For a conservatism of ignorance, like a liberalism of ignorance, is a curse to society; while a conservatism of reflection is a proper counterbalance to a liberalism of reflection.

My point is that, though the majority of Americans are conservative, they lack any intellectual leadership in the serious journals; and that is a most unhealthy condition for any people. The balance needs to be redressed, and that fairly promptly. The Communists have their *Science and Society*; the extreme “non-Stalinite Marxists” have their *Dissent*; the unorthodox Marxists have *Partisan Review*; the socialists have *The American Socialist* and *The New Leader* and *The Progressive*; the liberals have any number of publications; the conservatives have next to nothing. And that is an unhappy state for a country that believes in Discussion, and for a culture in danger of intellectual stagnation in the midst of material revolution of unprecedented proportions.

One reason why the serious journals are sliding down toward dusty death is their remarkable dullness. It is easier to abide folly or error than to abide dullness. Between platitude and pedantry, we seem to have been doing our worst to help along the comic-books and the cheesecake magazines. The best way to fight clear of dullness is to revive the great questions which ritualistic liberalism has long ignored. What is man? What is the tragic sense of life? Is there something more to reality than this workaday world? Is there something more to literature than grubby naturalism or minute internal criticism? Is there something more to society than economic efficiency, and something more to politics than boob-bumping? If the serious reviews can begin to consider such questions once more, and if some reform of our educational system can enable our college graduates to read words of more than one syllable, the Age of Discussion may not be over for a while yet.

FROM GERMANY

Frankfurt: Economic Barometer

DESMOND FENNELL

AS a city to live in, Frankfurt is unbearable. In a more spacious city like Berlin or Hamburg you have some chance of escaping from the concrete-mixers, the drills and the hammers. But Frankfurt, which has particularly narrow streets, is building more, and more rapidly, than any other German city. Though it is estimated that the central part of the city will be entirely built up less than five years from now, the plans just published by the city fathers foresee, in the ex-central parts, an immense scheme of new building and new traffic arteries which will continue over a period of decades, transforming Frankfurt the *grosse Stadt*—as the papers here say boastfully—into *Grossestadt* Frankfurt.

In the redistribution of influence that has taken place among the German cities as a result of the political conditions of post-war Germany, Frankfurt has, economically speaking, been one of the principal gainers. Of course, the old free-city was always an important merchant community and trading center and, in the nineteenth century, one of the focal points of advanced ideas. But the solid burghers who gave old Frankfurt its tone have disappeared with most of the Old City itself, which was destroyed by air attack in the war. Many of the most eminent of these burghers were Jews and were expelled by Hitler. The rest have become submerged in a city as hectic as only hard-working Germans and lavish Americans could have made it.

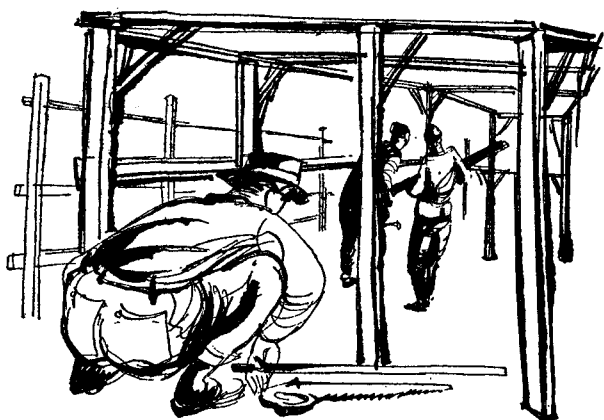
THERE are many reasons for Frankfurt's prosperity. The government of Hessen (to which Frankfurt belongs) took the initiative in welcoming very many East German refugees after the war. It succeeded in attracting much of the East German entrepreneur talent; Dresden and Leipzig firms, facing confiscation in the East, transferred their business activities to Frankfurt. This was true especially of banking and insurance companies. Frankfurt's tradition was mainly in the field of trading and finance. Many industrialists, however, established themselves in the industrial cities of the Main basin, immediately east and south of Frankfurt. It is estimated that between forty to

Mr. Fennell has taught in Spain for several years. At the present time he is a free-lance journalist residing in Switzerland.

fifty per cent of the people living in Frankfurt to-day are not native Frankfurters.

Then there were the Americans who for some years made Frankfurt their headquarters. Apart from spending a great deal of money directly, they brought wealth through their building and communications projects. They enlarged the Rhein-Main airport, which is to-day the busiest airport in Germany and a cross-roads of many European lines. This airport was one of the bases of the air lift to Berlin.

With Berlin isolated and the Russian Zone cutting deep into central Germany, Frankfurt occupied a most favorable central position between the northern and southern regions of the new Federal Republic. Many West German banking and insurance companies saw this and, following the trend, made Frankfurt their headquarters. From the start, the German *Notenbank*, the official currency issuing agency, was in Frankfurt. Frankfurt failed in its bid to become



the new political capital, but it has become the undisputed financial capital. Its stock-exchange is the leading one in Germany and one of the "barometer" stock-exchanges of Europe. Most of the foreign money invested in German industry passes through Frankfurt.

THIS is a city to get rich in, but it is advisable to spend one's money elsewhere. As pulsation center of West German prosperity, inflation is felt most strongly here and Frankfurt prices are the highest in Germany. It is also the best point, perhaps, from which to judge the validity of the fears of economic instability which the present prosperity has created in certain German quarters this year. These fears seem now to be on the wane and were probably no more than an instinctive reaction on the part of persons who find it difficult to abandon the classical but out-dated belief that prosperity is the immediate antecedent of economic crisis. Prices have risen somewhat this year, but German prices are still among the most stable in Europe. Dr. Roeper, head of the economic division of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, Germany's

leading newspaper, told me that a survey he made showed that prices in Frankfurt to-day are only 1-1.5% higher than in October of last year. He is a decided optimist, believing that the employers and the trade unions are both sufficiently enlightened today to cooperate in the maintaining of stability. He feels, however, that federal and local authorities should delay some of their building and communications projects until private building has passed its peak.

Meanwhile, Dr. Erhard, still guiding genius of the German economy, carries on an energetic campaign of "talking the prices down." In speeches, newspaper articles and open letters to the housewives, the workers and the entrepreneurs, he preaches confidence in the future of the free economy. He believes the German economy, after seven years' recovery, to be only at the beginning of its potentialities. But in the present phase of *Hochkonjunktur*, discipline and moderation are necessary on all sides. He asks manufacturers to reduce prices where possible, makes clear to the workers that increased wages can only be justified if production is increased accordingly and prices can be held stable. Housewives are urged to "use their vote" in the daily referendum of their commodity purchases and to force prices down by discriminating against over-priced goods.

So far the response has been good. Some manufacturers have made voluntary price reductions, and unions have made no unreasonable demands. This week Dr. Erhard hopes to make his most important personal contribution as Minister. After a long tussle with the Minister for Finance, he is at last to have his way. He now has support for his proposals for drastic reductions in the tax on coffee and sugar and lesser reductions of other commodity taxes.

AN APPEAL

A Carmelite Convent in South India is in urgent need of funds to build a school for the destitute orphans in their care. "At present the classes are held in sheds and the Indian educational authorities demand that we put up a proper school building. Besides, we lose so many pupils. If it means a chance for the Indian children to receive an education and to learn about their Creator, the worries and trials will be worth the effort. . . . I know that some of our dearest friends must give out of their own poverty." Up to the present these Carmelites have concerned themselves "primarily with the day-to-day basic needs" of these orphan children—keeping them supplied with food and clothing. The requirement of a school building represents an emergency of tremendous proportions. Donations may be sent directly to the Superior: Rev. Mother Alphonsus, St. Teresa's Convent, Ernakulam, Cochin State, South India. (India air mail postage: 25¢)

Testing a New Technique

A LITTLE over a year ago the Catholic Labor Guild of Boston tried a new technique in bringing the teachings of the Church to the workers. It organized what, for want of a better name, was called a "service committee."

The committee consisted of about ten union men who, with a chaplain, met every two weeks in somebody's home and discussed selections from the Gospel, Pius XII's encyclical on the Mystical Body, and various aspects of Catholic social teaching. The group was different from many discussion groups in that every meeting wound up with the members making some practical resolutions on how to put these Christian ideals into practice in the cold, hard world of work. At the next meeting they had to report on whether or not they had actually followed through on their resolutions.

The results were not sensational. Many times members had to admit that they had done little or nothing about their resolutions. A few recollections stick out. One night part of the discussion was on the Corporal Works of Mercy, and several resolutions were made to visit a sick friend. One man, a member of the Plumbers' Union, carried this out in real style. While working on a job out of town he dropped into the local hospital and asked if there was anyone there who seldom had visitors. They gave him a name and for the next few weeks he went to see the man regularly and struck up a warm friendship. Nothing more than that but, frankly, I was impressed.

Another discussion was on the question: "What Should Be the Worker's Attitude Toward His Job?" One member of the group, a union business agent, resolved at the end of this that he would "try to go through one whole day without goofing." He reported later that he almost, but not quite, made it, but I happen to know that he is doing a better job for his union as a result of being obliged to think and act about the principle of "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay."

There is nothing new about teaching something by means of discussion in a small group, as opposed to the lecture or sermon system, where people simply sit back, listen, and try to remember. But though there is nothing new about it, one tends to forget how much more effective it is, perhaps, because there is no doubt

that it takes a lot longer to train one hundred people if you take them in groups of ten than if you talk to them all at once.

The difference is mainly in this: in a small group everybody can get a chance to talk if the chairman is any good at all, and since the group is small and (after a few meetings) friendly, even the shyest types will usually dare to say something. The result is that they all feel themselves directly involved and, since they know they will have to say something they listen attentively while others are speaking, and they think harder so that they will be able to say something intelligent on the subject. Finally, once they have come to express the truth of a principle in their own words and in terms of their own experience, they remember that truth better than if they were simply sitting there listening to somebody else express it in his words and in terms of his experience.

There is something to be said for the thesis that you don't really know something until you can express it in your own words. But the ordinary worker seldom gets a chance to talk about any serious subject. He may hear others talk about serious subjects at church, at meetings, at night school, or maybe even on television. But serious conversation is not encouraged on the average job and it is not found in the average home.

One young fellow in our group, for example, was highly inarticulate when we started out. He had ideas, but he couldn't get his tongue around them, and was afraid of appearing foolish. Gradually he began to open up, to talk more often and more clearly. Before he had been with us a year he found himself speaking from the floor at union meetings, something he had never dared to do before. A little later he was elected vice-president of his local, and a leader was born.

Douglas Hyde, an English Catholic prominent in the Communist Party before his conversion, has said: "You can make a leader out of anyone who is willing to be trained in leadership. Over a period of time he can gain confidence, develop his ability to express himself, and acquire an attitude of mind by which he thinks of himself as a leader—a man who puts himself out while others hold back." It is true, and I think the best way to train leaders is through the small group.

A NOTHER thing that impressed me about our group was the eagerness of ordinary workers to talk about Christ and the Gospel. This is something they get little chance to talk about either at home or on the job. In their environment religion is something that no real man can afford to be caught talking about, because religion is thought a commodity that is exclusively the property of priests and women.

It was therefore a bit of a revelation to find that perfectly normal male workers were glad of the chance to talk about such things as Heaven, Hell and Redemption. It actually seemed as though they believed that these subjects might turn out to be important to them someday. In the booklet we used ("You and Your Job," published by Catholic Labor Alliance, 21 W. Superior St., Chicago 10) they tell you that the Gospel part of the meeting should never run more than twenty minutes. We used to have difficulty getting people to stop within the time limit.

That was one of our troubles: the meetings usually ran too long, and some of the members fell away because they got home too late. We also made the mistake of mixing in a few teachers with the real proletarians. Since the teachers tended to rise to the surface, some of the proletarians drifted away.

One terribly hot night last summer I left the house feeling like a martyr and convinced that there would be no more than two at the meeting besides myself. But the place was crowded. There were some new people, a few who hadn't been around for a while, and the hard core of regulars. It was a lively and rewarding night. It proved to me that the "service committee" plan works.

This year we're starting some new groups, one on a parish level concentrating on rank-and-file workers, another just for teachers. In Chicago the Catholic Labor Alliance expects to have about six groups going. Although the "service committee" technique has, of course, been used by the Christian Family Movement and the Young Christian Workers, as far as I know these groups in Boston and Chicago are the only ones using it to reach the adult worker and trade unionist as such. But it looks to me as though they will have company soon. At the Catholic Social Action conference in Cleveland this September, speaker after speaker returned to the complaint that the Catholic labor schools are not developing enough "apostolic lay leaders" to do an effective job of bringing the fulness of Christian teaching to the world of labor and management.

The testimony of Monsignor Joseph Donnelly, director of the Diocesan Labor Institute of Hartford and a veteran in the labor school movement, was particularly impressive in this regard. The time has come, he said, that "the training of these apostles should be the principal effort of our future." This training should be "intensive and restricted, aimed at the special few rather than at numbers, sharing the character of the Young Christian Workers' program of training. It should give us over the years a substantial army of trained laity to whom we can confidently entrust the objectives of this apostolate." The "service committee" can help to train that army.

JOHN C. CORT.

THE STAGE

A HANDFUL OF DUST

HEREWITH a week's chronicle, arranged in the order of ascending merit: Mr. George Axelrod's "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?" (at the Belasco) drearily takes a stencil of Hollywood life, omitting no smudge, no blot, no inky smear of sex. There is some brightness and color—Miss M—— M—— is savagely burlesqued—and Mr. Orson Bean sprinkles the occasion with his witty pepper. Yet the cheapness of it all! unutterable meanness, poverty, smutty wastes of deadwood—and that last intolerable, frowsy little flag of respectability, desperately run up ten minutes before curtain fall. In the showshops of Broadway, the theater is happily hewing out its coffin. . . .

The characters in Miss Edith Sommer's "A Roomful of Roses" (at the Playhouse) fall repeatedly upon the thorns of life, yet when they bleed, they bleed not ichor, nor the real right red thing, but a new kind of all-purpose detergent, attractively bottled by Procter & Gamble, who have done so much for (and to) the arts of feeling in our time. At the root of Mrs. Sommer's lachrymose comedy is a small human situation of genuine import—the play suggests a version of *What Maisie Knew* rewritten in the idiom of *One Man's Family*—yet whenever this threatens to flicker into truth, the dramatist potently smothers it with another bed of roses. Mr. Guthrie McClintic has directed for an aggressively self-conscious humor, though Miss Patricia Neal does nicely with her suburban angst; the performance has warmth, richness and personal distinction. Miss Neal does not, however, move with grace (she walks as if each mile were *The Last*), her voice lacks range, and she should avoid the tragic *agon*; it is not her forte. Mr. Donald Oenslager's modish set—another contribution to the housing shortage—agreeably distracts one from the naturalistic clutter of the play.

For the adaptation of Mr. Mac Hyman's entertainment "No Time For Sergeants" (at the Alvin), Mr. Peter Larkin has designed a fluid series of decors which ingeniously simulate an airliner in flight, a patch of Georgia backwoods, and the various areas of a disordered Air Force barracks. (The stage has lately taken to doing 'cleverly' what the movies do 'realistically,' just as the latter now seek to reproduce the actual conditions of the physical world. This confusion of genres is indisputably one of the surest evidences of decadence.) Mr. Ira Levin has also simulated a play out of the corn-pone-and-hominy-grit rusticities of Mr. Hyman's military folklore: the pudding has a real plum in Mr. Andy Griffiths, whose

cracker-barrel amiability never flags. I was amused by the evening, occasionally charmed: if it all seemed a little desperate and *voulu* (at ten-thirty, I felt a veritable grinning death's head), why that is merely the exhausting nature of farce. I had, as we say in my particular part of the forest, a lotta laffs. So whassa matta, you want "Oedipus Rex?"

Well, no, not quite: not, at least, always. Yet surely there is something incongruous in the possibility that a work such as "No Time For Sergeants" might crystallize a national idea of humor. For it lives—as does "The Teahouse of the August Moon," the tree from which it is but a branch—purely in the imaginative terms of cartoon and musical comedy. Yet as I looked about me at the Alvin, from my expensive (and complimentary) seat, I saw the wealth and elegance of the world's most sophisticated city caught up in that rapt, smug, slightly repulsive, 'hit' atmosphere of *guaranteed satisfaction*, and convulsed with innocent amusement at a comic strip, the situations and humors of which still brought down the house, as doubtless they did in every wartime USO canteen from Winnepesaukee to Council Bluffs. Innocence in New York! I had not thought to find so much goodness in the old bawd. One might consider, though, the quality of that innocence—whether it is merely another face of the spurious American naivete (as in Mr. Arthur Miller's latest exhibition) which permits us to feel the superior pleasures of self-righteousness, or that other absolute kind of innocence which turns inwardly and spreads among the complexities and corruptions of our real world its secret stain of purity.

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

FATHER, DEAR FATHER, COME HOME WITH ME NOW

AS timely as today's headlines is "Rebel Without a Cause," a new movie about juvenile delinquency that has enough penetration to make it worthy of consideration and enough lively cinema to hold your attention. The experience it provides is not exactly pleasant but the film fascinates while it repels, and it would be hard to leave without finding out what happens to this high school kid who just can't stay out of trouble. As a serious study, "Rebel Without a Cause" places too much of the blame on fathers, but as a case history of one very confused young man, it is absorbing from beginning to end.

Besides its interesting story, "Rebel Without a Cause" has the advantages of direction by Nicholas

Ray, who knows how to do a switchblade-knife scene taut with suspense as well as a puppy-love scene overwhelming with tenderness, and a magnificent performance by James Dean in the lead role. Still retaining a few of the tricks of the Marlon Brando school but not exaggerating them as much as he did in "East of Eden," in this effort Dean successfully managed the difficult job of making a character both annoying and likable. The youthful rebel in this case is both hard and soft; he wants above all to be able to respect his father ("I love him and all that sort of thing"), but his father (Jim Backus) is weak and subservient—almost a "Death of a Salesman" kind of father. Most people will probably feel for the headstrong, misguided boy who, after another lad's death in the hair-raising "chickie run," insists on going to the police to tell the whole story against the wishes of his parents: "Just once," he says, "I want to do something right."

At times "Rebel" is repetitive and its sermons in psychology obvious, but the cast, especially the young people surrounding Dean (Natalie Wood as a girl rejected by her father, Sal Mineo as a poor-little-rich-son of divorced parents, and many others) are far from dull. I'm not sure that the picture with its detailed portrayal of delinquent behavior is particularly good for young audiences, but it will certainly give parents something to keep them awake nights.

EVEN more frightening than the behavior of juvenile delinquents are the experiences both natives and whites go through in Kenya when the Mau-Mau terrorists go on the rampage in "Simba." Filmed in Africa and England, this film is trying to say that natives and white settlers can live together and will eventually, although they may have to go through a long period of adjustment before that happy day. In telling the love story of Dirk Bogarde and Virginia McKenna, "Simba" concentrates on Mau-Mau activities that are really blood-chilling, and as a result one gets a little impatient with the way Ginny and Dirk quarrel through most of the plot, giving the proceedings a slightly artificial atmosphere which detracts from the serious business. The picture's outstanding performance is turned in by Earl Cameron as a native doctor who is torn between loyalties as he works for his people and peace.

THE trouble with "The Trouble with Harry" is that Producer-director Alfred Hitchcock gathered a fine cast, then gave them practically nothing to do except look good in competition with some wonderful autumnal Vermont scenery. The result is probably the thinnest picture Hitchcock has made. It has Edmund Gwenn, John Forsythe, Mildred Natwick, Mildred

Dunnock and several other good actors, including a delightfully whimsical newcomer named Shirley MacLaine; and it has some amusing lines, several of which are startlingly risqué; but it has no mystery and, in fact, almost no plot except for the fact that Harry is dead and won't stay buried. What the picture does have in its favor are the Vermont backgrounds, beautifully photographed in VistaVision and Technicolor, but they do not make up for the plot's dullness or the *doubles entendres*. Maybe the trouble with Harry is Alfred.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

OF NOTE

CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL RESPONSIBILITY

THE Autumn issue of *Thought*, Fordham University Quarterly (441 East Fordham Road, New York 58, N.Y.), contains a lengthy article on "American Catholics and the Intellectual Life" by the Rev. John Tracy Ellis, Professor of Church History in the Catholic University of America. Excerpts from the article follow:

No fair-minded man will underestimate the energies, the resources, and the thought which the clerical leaders of the Church in the United States have expended in behalf of education since the tiny Georgetown Academy first opened its doors to students in September, 1791. Moreover, the generosity—often at the price of genuine sacrifice—which the laity have shown in support of the Church's primary, secondary, collegiate and seminary institutions has won the admiration of the Catholic world. Yet when one thinks in terms of the media through which distinction is normally won in the realm of advanced scholarship, namely, ample endowments for research, generous grants-in-aid to individual scholars, provision for extended leaves of absence from teaching duties, and the moral encouragement that comes from a consciousness that the Church's leaders are vitally interested and will effectively uphold the position of the Catholic intellectual, there has not been in our history the understanding or appreciation of the problems involved that there should have been. . . .

Part of the reason why American Catholics have not made a notable impression on the intellectual life of their country is due, I am convinced, to what might be called a betrayal of that which is peculiarly their own. The nature of that betrayal has been highlighted during the last quarter of a century by such movements as the scholastic revival in philosophy which found its most enthusiastic and hard-working friends

on the campuses of the University of Chicago, the University of Virginia, Princeton University, and St. John's College, Annapolis. Meanwhile the Catholic universities were engrossed in their mad pursuit of every passing fancy that crossed the American educational scene, and found relatively little time for distinguished contributions to scholastic philosophy. Woefully lacking in the endowment, training, and equipment to make them successful competitors of the secular universities in fields like engineering, business administration, nursing education, and the like, the Catholic universities, nonetheless, went on multiplying these units and spreading their budgets so thin—in an attempt to include everything—that the subjects in which they could, and should, make a unique contribution were sorely neglected. . . .

A second major defect in Catholic higher education that helps to account for its paucity of scholars of distinction, is what I would call our betrayal of one another. By that I mean the development within the last two decades of numerous and competing graduate schools, none of which is adequately endowed, and few of which have the trained personnel, the equipment in libraries and laboratories, and the professional wage scales to warrant their ambitious undertakings. The result is a perpetuation of mediocrity and the draining away from each other of the strength that is necessary if really superior achievements are to be attained. I am speaking here, incidentally, only of the graduate schools, and not of the competition—amounting in certain places to internecine warfare—among the more than 200 Catholic colleges of the land. In both categories, however, the situation is serious, and if Benjamin Fine, writing in the *New York Times* of May 8, 1955, is to be believed, there is every prospect that it will become more serious. There is, and there has been for years, a desperate need for some kind of planning for Catholic higher education on a national scale. As to the likelihood of such in the immediate future, there would seem to be little room for optimism. One might, perhaps, illustrate the point by a parallel. . . .

When the French National Assembly voted down the European Defense Community in August, 1954, a shudder went through the free world. Every man of perception realized that if the historic rivals of western Europe did not lay aside their differences there was a real chance that one by one they would perish at the hands of Russia and its satellites. Nothing less than that drastic alternative wrought a change of heart during the ensuing months, and it was the deep-seated fear of that grim fate that brought the representatives of the seven nations to Paris on May 7, 1955, to set their signatures to the newly formed Council of the Western European Union. The Catholic institutions of higher learning in this country

may soon face an equally grave threat to their survival. It will not be the peril of communist occupation that will bring them together to counsel for their mutual welfare, but it may well be a thing that Americans understand much better . . . bankruptcy.

An additional point which should find place in an investigation of this kind is the absence of a love of scholarship for its own sake among American Catholics, and that even among too large a number of Catholics who are engaged in higher education. It might be described as the absence of a sense of dedication to an intellectual apostolate. This defect, in turn, tends to deprive many of those who spend their lives in the universities of the American Church of the admirable industry and unremitting labor in research and publication which characterize a far greater proportion of their colleagues on the faculties of the secular universities. I do not pretend to know precisely what the cause of this may be, but I wonder if it is not in part due to the too literal interpretation which many churchmen and superiors of seminaries and religious houses have given to St. Paul's oft-quoted statement that "Here we have no permanent city, but we seek for the city that is to come," and their emphasis on the question of the author of the *Imitation of Christ* when he asked, "What doth it avail thee to discourse profoundly of the Trinity, if thou be void of humility, and consequently displeasing to the Trinity?" Too frequently, perhaps, those training in our institutions have had the same author's famous dictum, "I had rather feel compunction than know its definition," quoted to them without a counterbalancing emphasis on the evils of intellectual sloth. Certainly no intellectual who is worthy of the name Catholic would deny the fundamental importance of humility as an indispensable virtue in the life of the follower of Christ. But the danger of intellectual pride, grave as it is, should not be allowed to obscure the lesson taught by our Lord in the parable of the talents. If that principle had been pressed too far by Albertus Magnus we might never have known the *Summa theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas. Many may still recall a less dignified example of this mistaken emphasis when William Jennings Bryan gave eminent satisfaction to a Baptist fundamentalist audience in New York in 1923 with his declaration: "If we have come to the stage at which we must decide between geology and Christianity, I think it is better to know the Rock of Ages than the age of rocks."

Closely connected with the question of the prevailing Catholic attitudes in education is the overemphasis which some authorities of the Church's educational system in the United States have given to the school as an agency for moral development, with an insufficient stress on the role of the school as an in-

strument for fostering intellectual excellence. That fact has at times led to a confusion of aims and to a neglect of the school as a training ground for the intellectual virtues. No sensible person will for a moment question that the inculcation of moral virtue is one of the principal reasons for having Catholic schools in any circumstances. But that goal should never be permitted to overshadow the fact that the school, at whatever level one may consider it, must maintain a strong emphasis on the cultivation of intellectual excellence. Given superior minds, out of the striving for the intellectual virtues there will flow, with its attendant religious instruction, the formation of a type of student who will not only be able to withstand the strains which life will inevitably force upon his religious faith, but one who will have been so intellectually fortified that he will reflect distinction upon the system of which he is a product.

COMMUNICATIONS

"PALACES OF PLEASURE"

New York N. Y.

TO the Editors: Gabriel Gersh, in his article "Palaces of Pleasure" [Oct. 14], describes graphically the encroachment of industrialization and mechanization upon the leisure time of man. Planning and standardization cannot be limited to the processes of production, but must, by the logic of the situation, be extended to the sphere of consumption as well. Hence the planned "spontaneous" demonstrations, the "individualistic" perfumes manufactured by the millions of tons, the canned music "appreciations" and those planned resort vacations and conducted tours, which Mr. Gersh describes and in which the customers, now turned into transportable articles, are shuttled along the monstrous conveyor belts of the various entertainment industries.

However, the worst feature is not the supply of planning for leisure time which, given the current processes of production, is well nigh inevitable; the really ghastly aspect of it is the insatiable demand for it. There exists in our society a frightful craving for being manipulated, for being "attuned," of which the most blatant expression is the vision of millions of people across the continent laughing simultaneously at the same inane jokes, their laughter as planned and timed as the commercial to which it is the inevitable overture. Even Coleridge, standing at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, did better than we. Though his stimulus was opium, his vision was of nature. Now, this too has been lost.

THEODORE FRANKEL.

Catholics and the Grammar of Dissent

TOLERANCE AND THE CATHOLIC. A Symposium. Translated by George Lamb. Sheed and Ward. \$3.50.

By ERWIN GEISSMAN

WE are all concerned today with the problem of how to live with our fellow-men, assuring their dignity and our own, under pressures and tensions which too often take devastating toll of the human spirit. The modern world is not a moral situation to be defended or ignored or deplored. It is a basic fact of the individual experience of every one of us. Our task is to try to understand this enormously complex fact, and our duty as Christians is to bear witness to Christ in this world, a world which each of us in some sense makes what it is.

Religious pluralism is one of the facts of the modern world. There are few strictly confessional states today. The major powers in the West all present various forms of religious pluralism. The Christian experience is finding in these powers its most characteristic expression in our generation: 1) negative assurance of the freedom of the act of faith; 2) the preservation of the activity of the Church's mission; 3) the active cooperation of Christians in all those activities which contribute to the health and well-being of the community.

Although Catholic practice in the matter of collaboration with pluralist forces has frequently been exemplary, Catholic theorists have had some knotty problems to untangle. In the past, living in history has usually meant for the Church the necessity of dealing with states (conceived of as sovereignties, not peoples), more often than not with states which could be simply categorized as friendly or hostile. Today the Church's mission in the world is conceived in terms of souls, not states, and these souls are frequently embodied in persons who share political and community loyalties with non-Catholics. Some of the leading Catholic thinkers of our time have addressed themselves to

a reconsideration of the specific applications of traditional Catholic teachings in our vastly altered society.

With precisely such intentions a group of French and Belgian theologians met last year at the Dominican house in La Sarte. *Tolerance and the Catholic* is a translation of the papers read on that occasion. Represented were a fair part of the first team among the French speaking theologians: Congar, Léonard, Cerfaux, Bouyer, Dondeyne, and the great ecclesiastical historian Père Aubert. Perhaps the first feeling of an American Catholic on glancing at the list of contributors is one of envy. Would it be possible to bring together in this country a group of comparably qualified men even if one might draw on the entire Western hemisphere?

The papers tend to be tentative and probing, as they should be. The first section deals with the historical background of Christians and Tolerance from the New Testament to the Syllabus. Especially notable here is a fine essay by Aubert along the lines of his recent volume in the Fliche-Martin *Histoire de l'Eglise*. For American readers who have followed the comparable literature produced in this country during the past decade, the second section is probably the more interesting. Dondeyne, Léonard, Olivier and Congar successively take up the philosophical and theological issues involved. They all see the problem as a living one, part of the dynamism of existential living and thinking in the twentieth century. Yet all are conservative thinkers in the best sense of the term. Their examination of the data always remains within the context of firmly grasped dogmatic principles.

Most of the arguments are already familiar to American Catholics: the distinction between "error" and "those in error," Pius XI's distinction between freedom of conscience and freedom of consciences. Emphasis is placed upon the freedom of the act of faith and the in-

competence of the State to judge in spiritual affairs. One point is perhaps handled in this book with more clarity than I can recall having met with elsewhere. This is the insistence on the objectivity of the Church's preservation of dogma. Catholic "intransigence" on doctrinal matters is a natural outgrowth of the Church's mission. Here is Aubert on Papal "intransigence":

the unequivocal statements in the papal documents exist on the objective level, not as seen from the point of view of the subjective conscience.

and the following little essay from Congar might stand for a model of succinctness in dealing with an oft-misinterpreted matter (theologians are still largely innocent of semantics):

"It is a point not sufficiently noticed that the word 'Church' embraces a number of elements which are not all to be found on the same level. There is the Church as a dogmatic organization and an apostolic magisterium. As such she cannot but assert the truth of which she is the guardian in all its purity and denounce the indigence of all that does not absolutely conform to that which has been deposited within her. She cannot but be intransigent. Further, since she holds this fund of truth from on high, and contains it entirely within herself, she has in this respect nothing to receive from what is outside her. But there is also the Church as a religious organization living in history, which she transcends by her origin and essence, but within which she leads her concrete life; from this point of view she exists in and through her members, and is subject to the conditioning to which they are subject. They learn and receive from others and from history; she learns and receives in them. They live in a composite world and are themselves a composite of Christian and non-Christian—the only thing is that they try to enable the Christian to give light to the non-Christian, both in themselves and in the world.

Only the Church as a magisterium exists in a state of pure 'thesis', in her members, in the historic life she leads in them in the world, she is always in a state of 'hypothesis'—and the consequences to which this state leads go far beyond the question of the submission of the political power to the authority of the priesthood."

In practice the Church has not really waited on the theologians to clear the way for action, as a host of papal statements from the past half-century bear witness. Yet there may well be a correlation between the slowness of Catholics to engage in social and political action, and the popular misconception that dogma can be *univocally* extended into the political and social arena without losing much of its purity, force and authority. An anthology of quotations from this book could be presented to cheer the hearts of many of us who are in peaceful and happy association with our non-Catholic fellow citizens:

"The final justification of toleration comes from the fact that divine faith

cannot be given or maintained as though it were a human conviction or a human law. And therefore the non-Catholic's freedom is not to be based on contingent circumstances but on the nature of faith itself, 'and therefore on something permanent', something valid at all times and in all places, whatever the balance of forces may be between Catholics and non-Catholics."

"The danger of a 'sheltered' faith is precisely that it may either remain at the infantile stage at which a certain compulsion necessarily predominates, or wither away, as is frequently the case, in the inevitable transition towards the need for a personal choice. This 'sheltered' faith lasts in a hot-house atmosphere, but it dies in the open air. Now the sociological conditions in which the believer is called upon to live today are places in which the winds of every kind of doctrine blow."

"To be effective, religious freedom should be incorporated in a State's Constitution and confirmed by legal statute. No doubt the ideal of society

spiritually unified, a Church visibly coterminous with mankind, remains on the horizon of human history as an eschatological promise; but it cannot determine the ordering of civil society in the present world. Even on the assumption that there was to be a return to a time of triumph for the Faith, it would still remain a sacred duty to support religious freedom."

"If we take into consideration the great variety of historical conditions and the distance that separates theological truths from the political deductions to be drawn from them, only religious freedom and the civil equality of all forms of worship will be found to be indispensable to the loyal affirmation of freedom of faith. They are linked practically and indissolubly with the obtaining of this end. But the concrete means of realization, i.e. the political and juridical arrangements, will vary."

"The 'Christian' State is not the kind of State that ensures the Church a position of material privilege by means of legal enactments which have no real religious signif-



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icance; it is the kind of State in which the Redemption exerts its healing and governing influence through lay-folk, who may be Christians visibly or invisibly, acting upon the political structures and christianizing them not 'decoratively,' but 'vitaly and truly.'"

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of us in this matter, this is merely one aspect of the dearth of theological thought in this country. That the absence of familiarity with American writing is not merely a question of snobbery is indicated by the excellent use to which Père Léonard puts the work of Father John Courtney Murray. Those who know the work of Father Murray will be pleased to find that our most distinguished American theologian is held in such high regard by his European peers.

Gothic: Southern Style

BAND OF ANGELS. By Robert Penn Warren. Random House. \$3.95.

By JOHN F. SULLIVAN

FUTURE historians of American literature may well decide that the most significant event of the last three or four decades has been the continuing literary renaissance of the South. Indeed, it seems apparent even now that this Southern current has basically altered the course of the American novel. Naturally, there have been other influences at work on the novel in this time; naturalism, largely called into being by the brutalities of the modern city, has shown a tendency to fade out of the novel in the same tempo as such ameliorations as slum clearance and industrial labor organizations have advanced. But the contribution of the South to the novel has coincided with the lessening of the hold of naturalism, and it seems likely that it played a decisive role.

It will not be difficult for the literary historian to locate the sources of the Southern contribution to the novel. They are—as to form—a prolongation of the Gothic technique, kept alive since the time of Poe in countless melodramas of a subliterate standard, and—as to matter—a subject perfectly suited to the Gothic form, the guilt-laden problem of the Negro. (The wide appeal that this development in the novel has made outside the South suggests that the North is also belatedly becoming aware of its own guilt in this regard. The

Northern sense of sin, which does not, like that of the South, have roots in the soil of slavery, is less easily exorcised, because it is harder for us to acknowledge it.)

Out of this combination of Gothic form and the theme of sin against the Negro, much fiction of an enduring literary value has appeared—that of William Faulkner having already achieved classic stature. But in recent years Faulkner and others have been attempting some extension of their art in a more positive direction, undoubtedly stemming from a most natural desire to progress, to leave off expiation of past sins and to live an amended life. Unfortunately, these attempts, especially as they involve the subject of the Negro, have been pretty dismal failures. And I must now report that *Band of Angels*, Robert Penn Warren's newest experiment in this direction, is, from any serious point of view, almost the most dismal of these failures.

Warren's aim seems to have been to embody an image of the American, especially as confronted by the Negro who is a part of him, in a novel which would present almost a stylized facade of the devices of Gothic melodrama. The image is given the form of a character, Amantha Starr, who tells her own story. She is brought up as the daughter of a Kentucky planter, then sent off to be educated at Oberlin just before the Civil War, at that time a hotbed of fanatically religious abolitionists. "Manty" is thus representative of

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the two opposing regions in pre-Civil War American history—the slave-holding, genteel, agricultural, economically unsound South, and the fanatic, Puritan, commercial and manufacturing, economically booming New England.

But Manty turns out to have been the daughter of a slave, and so she is sold down the river, where she becomes, first, the mistress of a Southern planter and, later, the wife of a Northern officer. She is thus representative of the two races that have become inextricably intertwined in the nature of American life.

Manty is more, however, than a symbol of the bi-racial nature of America; she is also Warren's vehicle for his solution to the racial problem. Thus, though she seems to have loved him, she is unhappy with the man who owned her, because he was unable to make her forget that she was colored. He seems also to stand for the modern South, unable to let the past die. Her life with her northern husband is not much better, but the book

closes on a note of hope for the future that is not justified by any real analysis of the problem. But it is not primarily the falsity and weakness of this "solution" that is responsible for the failure of the book.

The failure stems from the mechanical way in which this thematic material is worked out through plot and other narrative devices which, once they are bereft of the blood and violence that give them such a Gothic *frisson* in earlier Southern novels, are seen to be merely the ordinary stock in trade of the stories that appear in women's magazines and under lurid covers in the corner drug store.

For *Band of Angels*, despite what are probably quite noble ambitions, remains merely a slick and sentimental capitalization on gaudy material. If this is all the Southern literary renaissance is to come to, the future literary historian will have to report that it had no more lasting significance than did its nineteenth century counterpart in the South.

Early American

CITIES IN REVOLT. Urban Life in America: 1743-1776. Illustrated. By Carl Bridenbaugh. Knopf, \$7.50.
CITIES IN THE WILDERNESS. The First Century of Urban Life in America: 1625-1742. By Carl Bridenbaugh. Knopf, \$6.75.

By WAYNE ANDREWS

JOHAN ADAMS steadfastly refused to believe that the struggle for independence dated from Lexington and Concord. "The revolution," he believed, "was in the minds of the people, and this was effected from 1760 to 1775 . . . before a drop of blood was shed." Adams could hardly disagree with the conclusion of Professor Carl Bridenbaugh's provocative reconsideration of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Newport, and Charleston on the eve of 1776—published now as a companion volume to a reprint of his acknowledged classic study of our cities in the seventeenth century.

"The primary role of the cities in

MEDITATIONS IN ADVENT

Sebastian Bullough, O. P.

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the attaining of American independence was preparatory," Mr. Bridenbaugh is convinced. "They provide five centers where the essential conjuncture of people, leadership, and events could occur and give complete expression to what Thomas Jefferson with his customary felicity called 'the unquestionable republicanism of the American mind.' Revolt would never have succeeded—nay, it would hardly have been attempted—had there not been this silent social and intellectual preparation."

Cities in the Wilderness is social history as it is rarely written. The author has succeeded in creating a mosaic out of thousands of incidents which a less perceptive scholar would have been unable to digest, let alone integrate. Mr. Bridenbaugh describes every imaginable aspect of urban life in the colonies, from the founding of our libraries and hospitals to the solving of such problems as street lighting. In every

chapter he is aware of the importance of our cultural traditions, and since he is an historian who takes nothing for granted, future studies of the arts in the eighteenth century will be immeasurably indebted to his researches. No one to ignore gossip that serves a purpose, he also sketches the rise of crime. One of his favorite characters is Tom Bell, a Harvard man who finally turned schoolteacher after a career as horse thief, counterfeiter, impersonator, and confidence man. Another is a jewel thief who passed herself off as the Marchioness of Waldegrave.

It is hardly fair to say that Mr. Bridenbaugh is our most distinguished colonial historian, although that is the truth. Distinguished books are books that go unread, just as chairs shrouded in dustcovers are seldom sat in. The author deserves better treatment than that. For no other scholar of the Colonial period has uncovered more telling evidence than he has, nor arrived at more challenging conclusions.

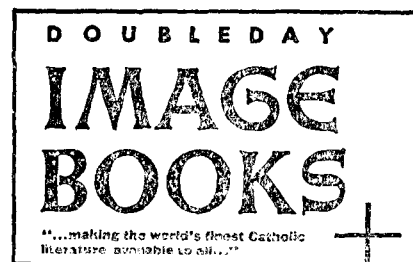
The Rooted Sorrow

BEYOND THE GLASS. By Antonia White. Regnery. \$3.75.

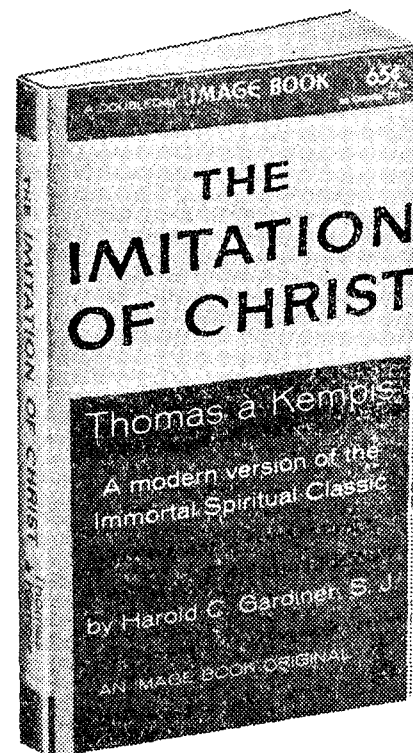
By JEAN HOLZHAUER

ENGLISH Antonia White has the distinction of being one of the best Catholic women writers of the generation; in a period which includes a Beatrix Beck, this is no little achievement. Miss White's first published novel has become something of a minor classic. To it she has added an absorbing trilogy of which *Beyond the Glass* is the third volume. According to her new American publisher, she is currently at work on a sequel to that.

Two things immediately strike the reader being introduced to Miss White's work. One is the remarkable sincerity of her writing. What, in the hands of another author, might have been a gentle, rather innocuous chronicle of convent school life is transformed by seriousness into Miss White's forceful, often compelling *Frost in May*. The



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same quality redeems the bizarre situations of the later books and lends them a peculiar conviction.

The other thing—and perhaps it is the same thing, really—is the astonishing repetition, in *The Lost Traveler*, of the plot and characters of the convent story. Explanation of this play-back is contained in the author's interesting contribution to Mr. Frank Sheed's collection of essays, *Born Catholics*. The twice-told story is an excerpt from the author's own girlhood.

One cannot be sure how much of the more recent novels is autobiographical as well, although there are hints of further real scenes and details. They continue the story of the same heroine, Clara Batchelor, her attempted marriage to Archie Hughes-Follett, her release by annulment, and her rediscovery of happiness with Richard Crayshaw.

The final romance begins on a psychic note ("Don't you feel something happening to you when I come into the room?") and is first interrupted, then ended, by the overwrought Clara's mental breakdown. The description of her confinement and treatment in a mental hospital is one of the most horrifying in modern fiction.

The weakest factor in Miss White's stories is the reader's difficulty, despite the over-all quality of the writing, in sympathizing wholeheartedly with the heroine. For it is not easy to stay with her during her stubborn attachment to her father, her persistent friendships with homosexual men, her "never-never" approach to romance and her eventual refuge in illness.

Like the heroine of *The Snake Pit*, Clara sometimes seems more like a stunning case history than a likeable real girl. But perhaps it is old fashioned to desire likeable heroines.

In her groping, Clara has moments of approaching the truth about herself, and thus reality, as in

her very well described visit to Clive Heron in "Beyond the Glass". At such times the reader's impulse is to cheer her on—"Come on, Clara, old thing, you'll get out of the woods yet!"—and his feeling, as she starts off again into the emotional jungle which is her home, is inevitably one of frustration and disappointment.

The Pharisaic Publican

TRUE MORALITY AND ITS COUNTERFEITS. By Dietrich von Hildebrand. McKay. \$3.

By LEO R. WARD

THE problem of this book is a broad one. The subtitle says it is the problem of existential ethics, and in a way this is true. The author narrows it to what he calls "circumstance ethics" and "sin mysticism." He says that some novelists, notably François Mauriac, take the sinner as a sort of nobleman and saint, at least in comparison with pharisaic, complacent and self-righteous men, and with all mere formalists and legalists. The author says Mr. Graham Greene goes farther in this direction than M. Mauriac, and Gertrud von Le Fort yet farther. His aim is to evaluate the position.

This may be stated in any of these ways. The thing done does not count; what counts is the person doing it, his love, and his seeing of himself and his action before God. What holds for a person in one situation will not hold in another, nor for anyone else in any situation: there are no moral laws

with a general coverage. The self-righteous man is hateful, and the mediocre, morally correct man, dull, conventional, and lacking positive virtue, is inferior to a good outright sinner—for example, a man living with another's wife—he is less charitable and humble, less disposed to conversion and real love of God and man: mediocrity is worse than sin.

Dr. von Hildebrand insists with his "existentialists" that each action is particular, is done in non-repeatable circumstances by a particular person. The unique attaches to any free act, a fact as much underscored by Aristotle and Aquinas as by Dewey. But the author says that this basic truth need not make us spurn the parallel truth that some standing principles count. In a wonderful passage on "conscience" he notes that conscience depends on standing rules. It is my conscience and operates only in particular or even peculiar situations. But we may not oppose it to general values and commandments. Conscience refers to general moral principles, and presupposes them.

Von Hildebrand grants that the hardhearted, impure man may have a deep longing for God and be better than a self-righteous man whose heart is "really anchored in money and social standards" though he is literally a good Christian. But he says it is an error to try to extend this evaluation to all sinners and to make mediocrity worse than sin.

Also sin mysticism runs into a formalism and legalism of its own. The sin mystic becomes a self-righteous zealot against mediocrity and everywhere smells out uncharity, hypocrisy and insincerity.



EVELYN WAUGH

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What Dr. von Hildebrand does in passing is perhaps more remarkable than what he set out to do. He calls attention in a real context to a sort of Kantian stiffness and formalism in almost all contemporary scholastic moral theory: form denuded of matter, for example of the ethnology to which M. Maritain would summon it, becomes unreal and dead: "sterile." John of Salisbury said of logic in the same fix. Von Hildebrand wants for ethics a concrete and qualitative "plenitude."

We wish he had gone farther in his own specifications and his own summaries. Judging from this book, who besides M. Mauriac falls under the heading of sin mysticism and circumstance ethics? Do Mr. Greene and other novelists, and some youth organizations? The author merely asserts it. The subtitle says the work is a critical study of existentialist ethics. We think it really is, but we wish some of the best known existentialists were cited and obviously studied. The stance attributed to M. Mauriac is common, and has other roots than hatred of the self-righteous. It runs like this: There are no ends, no natures, no determinate goods. It all depends. It is in only a question of the immediate situation with all its particularities. Each situation is found to be unique and to have no pre-pillars, no pre-principles, no law applicable to it and to other situations. Actions occur one by one; the four-dimensional contours of the agent cannot be repeated, and the agent's character, including his peculiar knowledge and freedom and his body, all of them decisive in choice and action, cannot be repeated.

In short, this is a challenging book, and we would like it to be still fuller of the great things our times demand.

REVIEWERS

Erwin Geissman is an editor of *Cross Currents*.

John F. Sullivan is a frequent contributor to *The Commonweal*.

Wayne Andrews is the author of *Architecture, Ambition and Americans*.

Father Leo R. Ward is the author of *Christian Ethics*.

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